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25 July 1966

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

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Approved For Release 2003/04/22 : CIA-RDP79T00975A009100150001-4

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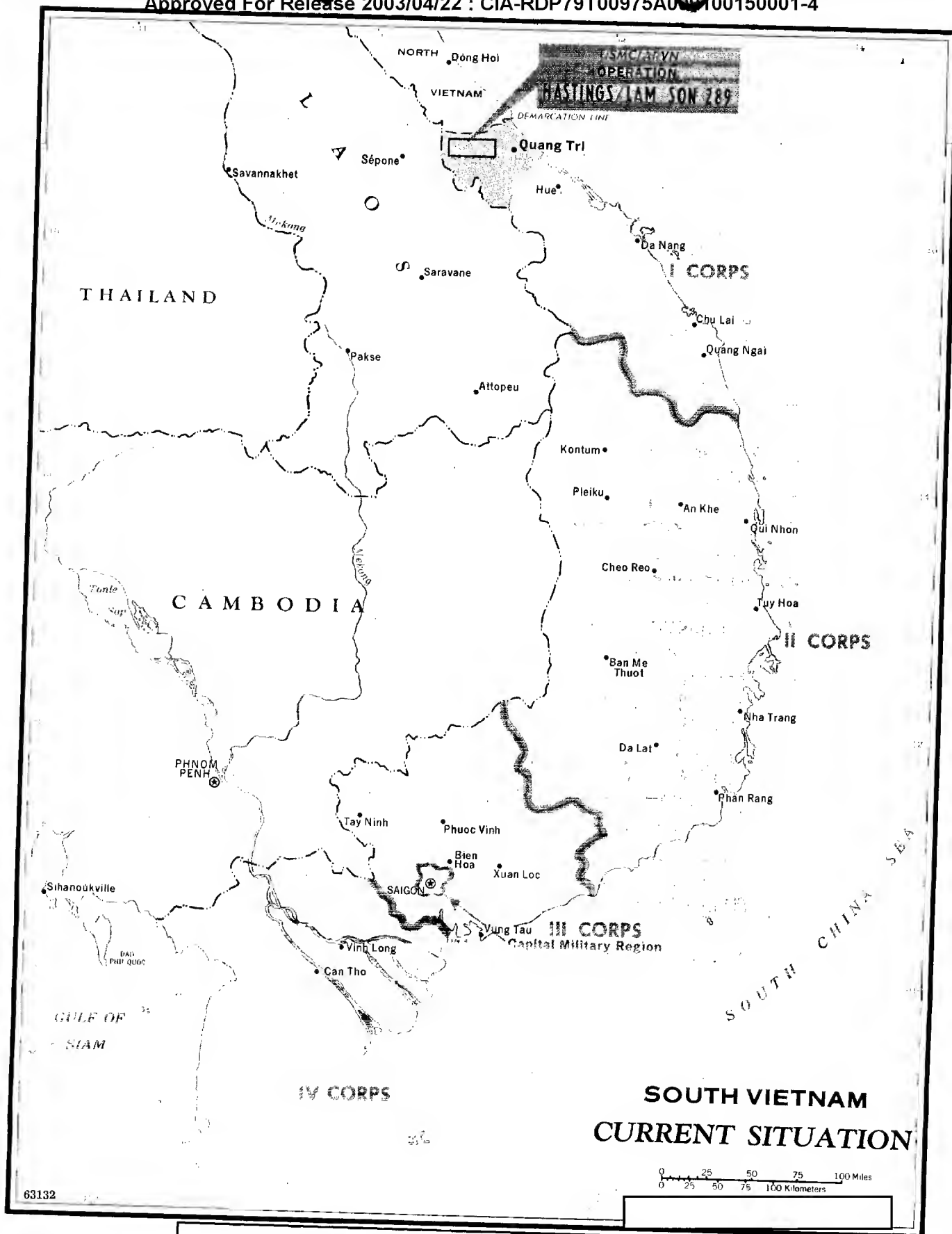
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*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EDT)

The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Allied forces in Operation HASTINGS/LAM SON 289 report continuing sporadic contact with the Communists in northernmost Quang Tri Province.

A US Marine battalion engaged an enemy force for nearly four hours on 24 July with light casualties on both sides. A total of 698 Communists have already been killed in this operation according to US body count. Unofficial estimates run as high as 1,300.

A captured North Vietnamese Army private recently provided some confirmation of high enemy casualty rates in the area of this operation by claiming that at least 50 percent of his battalion were either killed or wounded since the heavy fighting began.

Sufficient information now is available to confirm the presence of the entire 324B North Vietnamese Division--totaling 5,000 men--in Quang Tri Province. The headquarters of this unit is reportedly located 20 miles west of Quang Tri town. (see map)

Political Developments in North Vietnam: Hanoi appears to be trying to relax some of the tension generated recently by its own propaganda treatment of captured US pilots.

On 23 July, Hanoi Radio announced the establishment of a special committee to investigate US "war crimes"--the kind of crime attributed to the US airmen--and underscored its civilian character by subordinating it to the governmental Council of Ministers. A prominent civilian, Dr. Pham Ngoc Thach, who is Minister of Health and a close personal associate of Ho

(continued)

Chi Minh, was named Chairman. Only two of the eleven members are prominent military personalities.

Although the DRV wants to keep the issue of the captured pilots and their so-called "war crimes" alive, its recent propaganda threat to try the pilots may have been counterproductive. The announcement of the new committee may well be designed to relax the threat of urgency in the trials without making any basic change in Hanoi's long-standing policy toward the captured US airmen.

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West Germany - France: In their talks in Bonn last Thursday, Chancellor Erhard and President De Gaulle both made conciliatory gestures toward resolving the question of continued stationing of French troops in West Germany.

Although Erhard maintained that the French forces must have a properly defined military mission, he placed primary stress on his desire that they remain. The US Embassy in Bonn comments that if this means there is no longer any doubt that French troops will remain, the terms of reference for the role of these forces--which up to now have been prime concerns to Bonn--will presumably become less important.

De Gaulle injected some flexibility into the French position, stating that by signing the 1954 agreements France renounced the right of military presence in Germany except with German consent. According to a Bonn Foreign Ministry official, a French offer to acknowledge this in an appropriate manner would meet Bonn's concern about sovereignty. Although the official asserted that Foreign Minister Schroeder had always foreseen an agreement on this basis as a fall-back position, the US Embassy believes such an arrangement would be a retreat by Bonn.

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*Congo (Kinshasa): [The mutinous Katangese and mercenary troops who seized Kisangani (Stanleyville) on 23 July are presenting their grievances to Premier Mulamba who arrived early 24 July to attempt to restore order.]

[The Katangese are said to be unhappy over such issues as back pay, prolonged assignment out of Katanga, discriminatory practices of Congolese Army (ANC) officers, and reportedly fear an attempt to disarm them. Mulamba, the ex-commander of the Kisangani military district, is immensely popular with the troops.]

[The Katangese are not believed to be part of the alleged coup attempt by Tshombe and his supporters. The ex-premier has been reported in various European countries, but may be in Katanga. The role of the mercenaries in the mutiny is not yet clear but the central government claims they are leading the rebellion. The commander of the mercenary unit in Kisangani, however, is holding the bank and post office with some fifty members of his command and has pledged his loyalty to the Mobutu government. Other French-speaking mercenaries reportedly have flown into Kisangani to put down the mutiny.]

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[The 18 American citizens in the city are being evacuated.]

[* Because of the shortage of time for preparation of this item, the analytic interpretation presented here has been produced by the Central Intelligence Agency without the participation of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State or of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Department of Defense.]

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NOTES

France-NATO: [The French Government is engaged in a quiet but intensive diplomatic campaign to keep the North Atlantic Council (NAC) in Paris, [redacted]

[redacted] Despite a public posture of indifference to NAC's departure, the French attach very real importance to retaining the Council because of the store they set on Paris as the political capital of Europe. [redacted]

Sudan: [Those members of the ruling Umma party who favor party president Sadiq al-Mahdi for the premiership hope to push through a no-confidence vote against the ineffectual Prime Minister Mahjoub today. Procedural questions may delay the confrontation, but if the issue comes to a vote Sadiq and his supporters would probably win. Mediation efforts have been under way between the competing Umma factions largely because Sadiq is probably still anxious to avoid an open split within the party and among its four million tribal supporters.] [redacted]

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